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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
"*****"

Well, by now, the snow in Joe's yard has probably melted, so I can't really rub it in this week. Spring is closing in on us; I can just feel it. In fact, there was a huge golf expo last weekend, and a bunch of us took the trip into Boston to attend. I've been looking to replace some of my 30-year old clubs for quite some time now, and finally did. I'm in the mood for Spring, and getting out on the golf course. If we're lucky, we'll find a course that's open this weekend and I'll be able to try these out!

Other Than that, not much else going on these days. Retirement is still weighing heavily on my mind. Too bad things like a mortgage, food, etc. has to be a factor! Maybe I need some time off to get my thoughts together and figure out the best course of action should be. We'll see.

Until next time...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Another week has come and gone, and it seems that I've roused one or two people in the past seven days. That's good! I only wish it were more.

If you remember, last week I talked a little bit about the media and how they don't seem to have the same standards that they did several decades ago. Several people emailed me to say that they thought it was "the other side" that was influencing the media. I had expected that, since I've seen it a lot lately. What I hadn't expected was the ferocity of the opinions. People don't just think that it's the other side that's ruining the media, they're sure of it! It's almost like they're... "mad as hell.. and they're not going to take this anymore!" <grin>

So if some of us are sure that the media is being controlled by the

left and some of us are sure that it's being controlled by the right, and none of us believe that it's being controlled by the middle-of-the-roaders, where does that leave us?

It leaves us, my dear friends, with the disturbing possibility that the media just isn't doing its job. One of the great hallmarks of journalism these days seems to be 'balanced' reporting. Y'know what? That's not reporting. Journalists should be worried about being factual, not balanced. In most cases someone is right and someone is wrong. That's not balanced, it's factual. Life is bias.

Now, I have no problem with people who have different opinions than I do... Hey, if they don't mind being wrong, who am I to complain?
<grin>

MY problem is when someone re-defines words we all want to live by. Words like 'honor' and 'proper'. Sure, it starts out by redefining words like 'torture' and 'phone tap', but it always ends up by making 'wrong' seem 'right' and 'dumb' seem 'smart'.

So the next time you hear or read some journalist going about their job, ask yourself what's underneath the catch-phrases and half-thoughts. Do we really expect to "get pro-active and give a hundred and ten percent"? Is black really white just because someone switched definitions when they thought no one was watching.

Okay, I'm stepping down off of my soapbox. Let's get to the news, hints, tips and info from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st Newsgroup
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Guillaume Tello asks about capturing sound on a MegaSTE:

"Do you think it's possible to capture a sound (with a ST replay, timer A at 11 or 22 KHz) and to save it at the same time? (a double buffer: while I fill one, I save the other). Is it too much for a Mega STE?"

'Phantommm' tells Guillaume:

"I think it is possible, since the MSTC is 16mHz.

This is a project that I have looked at myself. I wanted to create a way to transfer small speech/sound recordings from the Falcon or other Atari to another Atari while both are connect to the net. So that one could really talk to one another.

After getting this done, then one could maybe add some pictures or maybe video using the VideoMaster Falcon or VideoMaster ST cartridge. (Really a program to transfer sound and maybe video too could be done based on the VideoMaster cartridge since it does both Sound and Video.)

I don't see why this hasn't been done by someone already. I know it would work with Falcons. And should work with Ataris

with good cartridge based sound digitizers.

If you are just want to basically do Direct to Disk recording on a MSTe. I think it is possible. If I am not mistaken, there was a program on a ST Format Cover disk that did this using some type of Cartridge based Sound Digitiser.

By all means create anything that you can in this area, as not much has been done yet."

Guillaume tells Phantomm:

"What I do now is a link between the TT and Mega STE:

- the TT captures the images with Vidi ST 12
- the Mega STE captures the sound with the ST Replay (only in RAM!)
- a serial link to synchronize everything.

As I have upgraded the TT Ram, now I can take a lot of frames on the TT, so I would like to take longer sounds on the Mega STE..."

Phantomm replies:

"I have some info for you that may help and is quite interesting,

In ST Format Issue 60, There is a program called SAM2DISK, Which is suppose to allow D2D (Direct to Disk) recording (Hard Drive) on any ST, using a sampler such as Stereo Replay, Replay 16, Master Sound, Stereo Master.

The version on the cover disk is fully working except for the save feature of the sequencer section disabled. (I believe you can still record to the hard drive though).

When registered you were suppose to get a few other useful programs.

Does anyone have the full registered version of this program!??? If so, do contact me.

The registration address was listed to be in England and cost 35.99 Pounds!! Back in 1994!

I have the Cover Disk with the Working Demo of SAM2DISK and remember running it on a 1040STE, but didn't have a sampler at the time to check it out.

This is the only program I know of that claims to allow Direct to Disk recording on a ST!

Maybe there are a few more, if so I would like to know about them.

Guillaume, if you don't have the cover disk, you maybe able to download it from the net. There is a site that has most of ST Format Cover Disks, I forget the URL at the moment.

Google for ST Format Cover Disks, or Atari Magazines and you should find it."

Well folks, that's it for this week. I know it's short, but I'm feeling a sinus infection coming on. I've also got to go poke a couple of journalists with a sharp stick. <g>

So tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - PlayStation 3 Delay A Reality!
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Variety Claims PlayStation 3 Delay

A new interview with Sony CEO Sir Howard Stringer by Hollywood trade magazine Variety has indicated that the PlayStation 3 will be delayed until later in the year, due to complications revolving around the console's complex chipset.

The Variety article attributes the delay to the company 'fine-tuning' the console's technology, referring to the PlayStation 3 as a 'the poor man's Blue-ray [sic]', and suggests that the console will be released before the end of the year, but does not include a specific comment from Stringer confirming this.

The only direct quote from Stringer on the subject suggests that if the PlayStation 3 "delivers what everyone thinks it will, the game is up", presumably referring to rival consoles from Microsoft and Nintendo. Regarding the Blu-ray format in general, Stringer is quoted as saying, "Once Microsoft picked sides it was clear we were going to be in a battle royale." He also added, "We won't be stampeded" by Microsoft into rushing decisions "that are there forever."

The article does not mention a specific territory when discussing the date of the console's new launch, but it is implied that it is referring to

North America. Few analysts have ever expected a Western launch for the PlayStation 3 in spring, although it is now looking increasingly likely that the Japanese launch will also not take place until this summer at the earliest.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Permanent Internet Tax Ban Proposed

U.S. Representative John Campbell (R-Calif.) introduced on Friday legislation to permanently protect Internet commerce from discriminatory taxes and disallow taxation on Internet use.

The new bill amounts to an amendment of the 1998 Internet Tax Freedom Act, which is set to expire in November 2007. Campbell is seeking to extend the deadline on the tax ban indefinitely.

"Members of congress put a 'sunset' in the bill, which means that it remains in effect for a while and then expires," Campbell said in an interview. "I think we have enough experience now with the Internet and what it has done and can do for commerce and communication, that we should make that ban on taxation permanent."

Former California Congressman, and current SEC chairman Chris Cox authored the original bill in a bid to promote and preserve the commercial potential of the Internet. The bill likens the Internet to a form of interstate and international commerce. It prevents the creation of new state and local taxes on Internet access and bans taxes that discriminate against e-commerce.

"We don't want to retard the growth or use of the Internet by having states or localities tax it," said Campbell. "So, if the state of California decided 'we're going to put a tax on shoes sold on the Internet because there are lots of shoes being sold and we want to make money off of that,' this prohibits that from happening."

The Internet Tax Freedom Act prohibits taxes on three different levels: access, use and discriminatory taxes.

In terms of access, the bill would disallow local governments from taxing the traveling of information across a broadband network to the users' computer. In addressing "use," the bill would ban taxation on such services as e-mail. To discourage discriminatory tax practices, the bill would prohibit state governments from mandating a tax on Internet sales.

"I oppose taxes on Internet use, period - from federal, state or any other government," said Campbell. "I think this bill symbolically says that we, the federal government, don't believe that anyone should be taxing the

Internet."

Apple's MacBook Pro Is Fast Laptop

Apple Computer Inc.'s notebooks have long been highly regarded for their thoughtful designs and leading-edge features. But when it comes to performance, recent models have been lagging behind competitors that run Intel Corp.'s chips.

Unable to beat 'em, Apple last year announced plans last year to join 'em. It recently began shipping its first Intel-based laptop, the MacBook Pro, which looks a lot like the old PowerBook G4 line it's replacing.

Like the iMac desktop that also got a silicon brain transplant, the new notebook is fast, with decent battery life.

Also like the old PowerBooks, it includes some very nice touches, such as an impressively bright screen, stylish aluminum body, a video camera built into the display's frame, a keyboard that lights up in a dark room, and built-in Wi-Fi and Bluetooth transmitters.

The initial MacBooks, all with a 15.4-inch widescreen displays, start at \$1,999, for a 1.83 gigahertz Core Duo microprocessor, 512 megabytes of memory and an 80 gigabyte hard drive. The \$2,499 model has a 2 GHz processor, twice the memory and a 100 gig drive.

I reviewed the higher-end model with a few extras tossed in - including a faster 2.16 GHz chip, faster hard drive and the maximum 2 gigabytes of memory. Besides its appearance and performance, there's something else that's breathtaking: its \$3,199 price tag.

Still, it boots up in about 20 seconds. Programs launch without hesitation. The 69 megabyte, high-definition "Cars" movie trailer played flawlessly, to the delight of our toddler, even with other programs running in the background.

To execute instructions at maximum speed, Intel-based chips need "Universal" software that's adapted to it. Older software written for the PowerPC chips supplied by IBM Corp. and Freescale Semiconductor Inc. also can be used, but there is a speed penalty. So far, more than 1,000 programs have been "Universalized."

What about the all-important battery life? Starting with it fully charged, I surfed the Web, listened to music and engaged in other regular tasks for an impressive 3 hours and 10 minutes before the system went to sleep. Once plugged in, it woke up in seconds, exactly where it stopped.

The run time was slightly longer than for an older PowerBook, which I tested under similar under similar conditions a year ago. In that case, the battery fully drained in just under three hours.

The MacBook's result is even more impressive because the Intel chip runs two computing engines at once, instead of just one on the PowerBook's G4 chip. The MacBook's processor also runs at a faster clock speed.

But in another test, where I continuously played a "Thomas the Tank Engine" DVD, the fully charged battery lasted a little over two hours before

running out of steam. It's basically the same result I had with the PowerBook G4 I tested a year ago.

Another noticeable difference is in the power cord. Rather than snapping into a socket in the laptop, it attaches magnetically. If someone trips over the cord, it will just break away, leaving the MacBook on your lap rather than the floor.

It works as advertised, though it also had a tendency to pull out while I was surfing the Web on the couch. This is where the longer battery life pays off.

Apple also ships the MacBook with a remote control and its Front Row software, a program designed for watching movies, viewing pictures and listening to music from a distance. The notebook also can be connected to an external monitor or TV, using a built-in DVI port or other optional cables.

One particularly neat feature, made available through a software update last week, allows music and pictures stored on other computers to be remotely accessible through Front Row. It uses Apple's Bonjour technology, which is arguably the easiest networking technology ever.

Still, there are some downsides to the MacBook.

Apple has switched to a slightly slower optical drive for reading and burning CDs and DVDs and it's also dumped the built-in modem, which might be an inconvenience to anyone without broadband. It's also increased the size of the power adapter.

Still, those are minor quibbles. The new notebooks may have a new name and brain, but they haven't lost the Apple shine.

MIT Researchers Extend Computer Life Without Batteries

Researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology have found a way to extend the power life of mobile computers.

Instead of using batteries, they draw power from an electronic device called an ultracapacitor. The approach is still several years away from being used as the main electricity source for commercial laptops and handhelds, but is already used for backup power in many small consumer products.

"A number of electronic devices already use commercial ultracapacitors for specialized functions," said Joel Schindall, a professor in MIT's Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

"For example, a clock radio may use an ultracapacitor as a keep-alive source in case of power failure, and even the old Palm III used an ultracapacitor to retain its memory while the AA batteries were changed."

The new technology could shake up the retail computer business, where computer makers already compete for market share by boasting of more power-efficient machines.

Chip makers battle for business by launching more efficient processors like Intel's Centrino and AMD's Turion, trading high performance speed for mobile endurance.

Hewlett-Packard also says its customers demand longer run-times. The company announced Monday that its HP Compaq nx9400 notebook will run on three levels of battery packs. Those range from the standard, four-hour unit to a substitute battery that adds five more hours, and a clip-on, supplementary battery that adds another 10 hours.

The speed at which a battery charges is also important to users. HP says its enhanced lithium ion battery can gain 90 percent of a full charge after just 90 minutes of being plugged into a wall outlet.

By comparison, a consumer with a cell phone powered by MIT's ultracapacitor could gain a complete recharge in just a few seconds, Schindall says.

The new device is called a nanotube-enhanced ultracapacitor, or NEU. It works by applying nanotechnology to an existing electrical device; the capacitor.

Generic capacitors store energy as an electrical field. That is more efficient than standard batteries, which get their energy from chemical reactions. Even more efficient is the ultracapacitor, a capacitor-based storage cell that provides quick bursts of instant energy. The drawback is size - ultracapacitors need to be much larger than batteries to hold the same charge.

The MIT researchers solved this problem by taking advantage of the enormous surface area of nanotubes; molecular-scale straws of carbon atoms that enable ultracapacitors to store electrical fields at the atomic level. Storage capacity (and charging speed) in an ultracapacitor is proportional to the surface area of the electrodes, so the nanotubes provide a great leap forward.

Despite this promise, researchers say they still have three to five years more work before they can replace a computer's main battery.

One drawback is that the ultracapacitor provides direct current power. That is suitable for running power-off functions like a laptop's clock, but most desktop devices use alternating current for their main operations.

Microsoft Launches New Internet Search Engine

US computer software powerhouse Microsoft unveiled a revved-up Internet search engine geared to challenge its online arch-rival Google.

The Redmond, Washington, company went public with a beta version of "Windows Live Search" and an updated tool bar at the website www.Live.com.

"Were unveiling a range of innovations that deliver an outstanding level of power and simplicity to search," the unit's vice president Christopher Payne said at a conference in southern California.

"Combined with the rich browsing and integrated searching services delivered by Windows Live Toolbar and Live.com, the new search service offers customers the next generation of unified services."

Live was designed to provide users with tools to quickly find, view and organize Internet search results in categories including news, images, e-mail, and news feeds, according to Microsoft.

Live was introduced as online search titans such as Google, Yahoo, Microsoft, and Ask compete for the loyalty of Internet surfers.

The more users a search engine has, the more opportunities it gets to make money from online advertising and selling premium services.

Spam Rates Rebound

After several months of slipping spam rates, junk mail rebounded during February, message filtering company Postini said Tuesday.

According to Postini's data, spam grew by two percent over the previous month.

"The increase in spam was due to an increase in tax preparation offers and other financial service offerings," said Andrew Lochart, Postini's senior director of marketing. It's usual to see a spike in financial-oriented spam during the run-up to the April 15 tax-filing deadline, he added.

Spam accounted for 73 percent of all mail sent during February, Postini's data showed, although some days were significantly above that average. On Feb. 18, for instance, 82 percent of all mail was classified as spam by the San Carlos, Calif. company. The number was almost as high Tuesday: 81 percent.

Virus-carrying mail, meanwhile, slipped back to its usual 1.5 percent of all messages, after a bump up in January due to the Kama Sutra (aka MyWife, aka Nyxem) worm, which was widely distributed prior to a Feb. 3 trigger date when it was to delete files. Kama Sutra, however, turned out to be a bust.

"MyWife ranked only eighth on Postini's top ten viruses for the month," said the company in a statement. The worm is currently ninth on Postini's list.

The volume of phishing attacks also fell in February, and were 65 percent lower than during January. But Postini's numbers conflict with those from other sources, which while noting a slackening of phishing during the middle of 2005, have claimed record-setting phishing levels already this year.

Hacker Gains Root Access to Mac OS X in 30 Minutes

It took a hacker less than 30 minutes to gain root-level access to Mac OS X, according to a report from ZDNet. The hacker who penetrated the system called the Mac "easy pickings."

The security breach took place on February 22 after a Swedish devotee of the Mac set up a Mac Mini as a server and invited all takers to try to

compromise the system's security to gain root-level control. Once a hacker has gained root access to a computer system, the attacker can install applications, delete files and folders, and use the computer for any nefarious purpose.

The competition was over in a matter of hours after a hacker, who asked to be identified only as "Gwerdna," gained access to the server in question and defaced the Web site with a message that read, "This sucks. Six hours later this poor little Mac was owned and this page got defaced."

Gwerdna told ZDNet that it took him a mere 30 minutes or less to gain root control of the Mac. "It probably took about 20 or 30 minutes to get root on the box," Gwerdna said. "Initially, I tried looking around the box for certain misconfigurations and other obvious things but then I decided to use some unpublished exploits - of which there are a lot for the Mac OS X."

Although Gwerdna said that the Mac Mini could have been protected more effectively, he also said that, even had the machine been configured for better security, it would not have stopped him because the vulnerability he exploited has yet to be published and Apple has not released a patch for it.

The winner of the hacking contest went on to say that there is a limitation on what hackers can do with unknown and unpublished vulnerabilities because there are countermeasures that systems administrators can employ to tighten security - even for unpublished software flaws.

Although Gwerdna said that Mac OS X contains unpatched vulnerabilities that would permit a hacker to infiltrate Apple's operating system, he said that the relatively small number of Macs in use - in contrast to the vast number of PCs running Windows - is the reason more hackers do not try to exploit them.

"Mac OS X is easy pickings for bug finders," he told ZDNet. "That said, it doesn't have the market share to really interest most serious bug finders."

News of this contest comes on the heels of Macs being hit by two viruses and a critical security flaw. Security experts called the Leap and Inqtana viruses relatively harmless because of their limited scope, but rated the security flaw in Apple's Safari Web browser as critical.

Discovered by Michael Lehn, a graduate student and research assistant at the University of Ulm in southern Germany, the Safari vulnerability could have allowed attackers to disable a Mac computer after tricking the user into accessing a phony Internet site that contained malicious code.

Up until the point that Apple patched the flaw, the Safari browser's default configuration was set to open and run compressed files automatically. Attackers could exploit the flaw when Mac users downloaded files in which malicious software had been disguised to appear as safe.

Apple issued a security update last Wednesday to fix 20 Mac OS X vulnerabilities, including the Web-browser problem and a similar flaw in Apple's Mail client. The update also patched iChat, Apple's instant-messaging application, which now relies on an Apple technology called "download validation" to warn users of unknown or unsafe file types during transfers.

"The lesson here is that if we look at Mac OS X and compare it to, say,

Windows XP, we find that, in terms of the number of vulnerabilities, they are actually quite comparable," said Vincent Weafer, senior director at Symantec Security Response.

What might surprise many is that both Apple's Mac OS X and Microsoft's Windows have roughly the same type of vulnerabilities in a similar volume, said Weafer.

But he did say that direct comparisons are not possible because both companies report vulnerabilities and security updates differently - and Apple ships more applications with Mac OS X than Microsoft does with Windows.

Weafer also said that hackers are not capitalizing on vulnerabilities in Mac OS X to the same degree they are trying to exploit flaws in Windows. Weafer estimated that there are between 100,000 to 200,000 Windows viruses compared to 200 or so Mac viruses.

According to Weafer, the number of Mac vulnerabilities discovered and the possibility they will be exploited will gradually rise as a direct result of an increased interest in Mac OS X. Weafer urged Mac users to make sure they have installed antiviruses and antispyware applications and are updating them regularly.

Famed "Computer Terrorist" Teaches Anti-Hacking

He can find George Bush senior's social security number and Leonardo DiCaprio's mother's maiden name in under 15 seconds, and led the FBI on a three-year manhunt as he hacked his way into the world's biggest firms.

"Computer terrorist" Kevin Mitnick is one of the world's most famous computer hackers and became a cause celebre after breaking into networks and stealing software at companies including Sun Microsystems and Motorola.

Now Mitnick, from the United States, travels the world teaching companies how to guard against people just like him.

He argues that while sophisticated technology can help keep networks clean from viruses, it is useless if hackers can con a company's employees into handing over passwords by posing, for example, as colleagues.

"Hackers find the hole in the human firewall," Mitnick told an information technology security conference on Wednesday in Johannesburg, South Africa. "What's the biggest hole? It's the illusion of invulnerability."

"Social engineering" - as hackers call tricking people - formed the main thrust of his career, in which he penetrated some of the world's most sophisticated systems often by persuading unwitting staff to hand over top-secret information.

Mitnick, now in his early 40s, started hacking phone systems in his teens before moving on to computers, but says he never stole money or caused deliberate damage and hacked just for the thrill of it.

The hobby earned him a place on the FBI's most wanted list and an almost five-year stint in U.S. jail in the 1990s.

On his release he was initially banned from surfing the Web, and has since written two books about hacking and started an IT security consulting firm.

Now the companies he once stole secrets from pay him to hack into their systems and show them how to improve security.

Mitnick said hackers conduct meticulous research into companies and their staff, even swotting up on the hobbies of target employees to better win their trust.

And firms underestimate how easily hackers can get hold of personal information - like driver's license numbers, social security numbers and mothers' maiden names - which are often used by banks or other companies to screen customers.

To prove it at the conference, he found former U.S. President George Bush's driver's license number and the maiden name of Hollywood actor DiCaprio's mother within 15 seconds, and said he knew how to find social security numbers.

"The problem is that it is a good human quality to give people the benefit of the doubt, and unless you've been burned, or you're paranoid, then you will probably trust them," he said.

Companies must guard against smooth-talking hackers by making their staff aware of the risks, developing simple company policies on data protection, and getting the best technology, which will at least "raise the bar" for hackers.

"It's not about being paranoid, but it's about being very aware, and very alert," he said.

MySpace.com Safe Despite Reports

The popular Web hangout MySpace.com is as safe as anyplace in the offline world despite recent reports that sexual predators may be using it to find and lure young victims, the company's CEO said.

"If you go to the mall and start talking to strange people, bad things can happen," Chris DeWolfe, the site's co-founder, said in a telephone interview. "You've got to take the same precautions on the Internet."

MySpace, a division of News Corp., offers a free way for users to meet any of more than 60 million members. Searching by hometown, alma mater or interest, people can make new friends, reconnect with old ones and interact in other ways.

But in the past month, authorities nationwide have expressed concern that the searching options that make the site popular also put children at risk for abuse.

Last week, two men were arrested in what prosecutors said were the first federal sex charges involving MySpace. Both met the girls through their MySpace.com profiles, the FBI said.

In one case, prosecutors said Sonny Szeto, 22, traveled from Jersey City, N.J., to Connecticut in October and molested an 11-year-old girl in her

playroom while her parents slept upstairs, according to an FBI affidavit. In the other case, Stephen Letavec, 39, was charged with molesting a 14-year-old visiting from Elrama, Pa., in October.

A Middletown officer called it "a predator's dream come true." Connecticut Attorney General Richard Blumenthal said it was a "parent's worst nightmare." And U.S. Attorney Kevin O'Connor said he would have serious reservations about letting his own children use the site.

DeWolfe said MySpace gets a lot of attention because it has so many members, but he said the site simply offers a collection of tools already widely used online: personalized home pages, instant messaging, e-mail, Web logging and video sharing.

People who put themselves at risk on MySpace, DeWolfe said, would be doing so elsewhere.

"This isn't a MySpace issue," he said. "It's an Internet issue."

Parents are accustomed to teaching their children how to stay safe and DeWolfe said that needs to extend to the Internet. He said MySpace offers a list of safety recommendations.

"Don't post anything you wouldn't want the world to know. On the Internet, people aren't always who they say they are," he said. "If you keep some of those safety tips in mind, the Internet can be a pretty safe place."

Children younger than 14 aren't allowed on MySpace and 14-year-olds are allowed only restricted access. DeWolfe said the site uses a computer program that analyzes user profiles and flags members likely to be under 14. More than 200,000 users have been deleted, he said.

But children regularly lie about their age to get around those restrictions.

DeWolfe said company officials have assisted on more than 2,400 investigations, from criminal cases to runaways, and make themselves available to investigators around the clock.

"We think MySpace is a great place for all users over 14," he said.

US Court OKs Computer Searches for Child Porn

Police may search computer hard drives for child pornography if their owners subscribe to Web sites selling the images, a U.S. appeals court ruled on Thursday.

There is a "fair probability" customers of child pornography Web sites receive or download the illegal images, opening the door for police searches, according to the ruling by the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals.

The ruling affirmed a lower court's decision supporting an affidavit by the Federal Bureau of Investigation for its probe of Lolitagurls.com Web site and subscriber Micah Gourde.

Gourde had sought to suppress more than 100 images of child pornography seized from his home computer, arguing an FBI affidavit did not establish

probable cause he had violated child pornography laws to justify a search of his computers.

The San Francisco-based court took up his appeal. The panel voted nine to two in ruling that a district court had properly declined to suppress the evidence.

The majority opinion by Judge M. Margaret McKeown held there was a "reasonable inference" that supported a "fair probability" Gourde had downloaded banned images.

She noted the owner of Lolitagurls.com admitted to selling child pornography over the Web site and Gourde subscribed to it with a credit card and had unlimited access to its images. Additionally, she held computer technology assured any images he received would leave a trail for investigators.

"It neither strains logic nor defies common sense to conclude, based on the totality of these circumstances, that someone who paid for access for two months to a Web site that actually purveyed child pornography probably had viewed or downloaded such images onto his computer," McKeown added.

Gourde's attorney, Assistant Federal Public Defender Colin Fieman, said he would discuss with Gourde whether to appeal it to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Google to Pay \$90M in 'Click Fraud' Case

Google Inc. has agreed to pay up to \$90 million to settle a lawsuit alleging the online search engine leader overcharged thousands of advertisers who paid for bogus sales referrals generated through a ruse known as "click fraud."

The proposed settlement, announced by the company Wednesday, would apply to all advertisers in Google's network during the past four years. Any Web site showing improper charges dating back to 2002 will be eligible for an account credit that could be used toward future ads distributed by Google.

The total value of the credits available to advertisers will be lower than \$90 million because part of that amount will be used to cover the fees of lawyers who filed the case last year in Arkansas state court. The proposed settlement still requires final court approval.

The lawsuit, filed by Lane's Gifts and Collectibles on behalf of all Google advertisers, revolves around one of the most sensitive subjects facing Google and Yahoo Inc., which runs the Internet's second largest marketing network.

Yahoo, which is also named in the suit, said Wednesday that it intends to fight the lawsuit's allegations.

Mountain View, Calif.-based Google makes virtually all of its money from text-based advertising links that trigger commissions each time they are clicked on. Besides enriching Google, the system has been a boon for advertisers, whose sales have been boosted by an increased traffic from prospective buyers.

But sometimes mischief makers and scam artists repeatedly click on specific

advertising links even though they have no intentions of buying anything. The motives for the malicious activity known as click fraud vary widely, but the net effect is the same: advertisers end up paying for fruitless Web traffic.

The lawsuit alleged Google had conspired with its advertising partners to conceal the magnitude of click fraud to avoid making refunds.

The frequency of click fraud hasn't been quantified, causing some stock market analysts to worry Google's profits will falter if it turns out to be a huge problem.

Google executives have repeatedly said the level of click fraud on its ad network is minuscule - a contention that the proposed settlement amount seems to support.

The \$90 million translates into less than 1 percent of Google's \$11.2 billion in revenue during the past four years.

Symantec Report: Internet Attacks Are Increasing

In its recent Internet security threat report, Symantec concluded not only that threats are rising but also that there is an increasing amount of evidence supporting the contention that these attacks are being done with profit in mind.

The report covers the six-month period from July to December, and includes analysis of network-based attacks, reported vulnerabilities, and the effects of adware, spyware, and malicious code. Also tracked is spam and phishing data.

Symantec collects the information from more than 40,000 security devices that are installed around the world.

A significant concern in the security industry is the growth in the number of attackers that are motivated by financial gain rather than by bragging rights.

"Phishing has gotten a lot of attention, and for good reason," said Javier Santoyo, development manager at Symantec Security Response. "These people tend to share information, like how to set up dummy e-mails, and that's driving more phishing by people who aren't as technologically savvy."

In addition, Symantec found that companies have been targeted by small hacker groups practicing a form of extortion in which attackers threaten their systems or steal data.

Enterprises should remain diligent about their security measures, Santoyo said, and also continue aggressive user-education campaigns.

"Just letting users know about configuration management and maybe installing heuristics-based solutions on desktops goes a long way," he said. Security products that rely on heuristics look for patterns in viruses and hack activities.

In addition to drawing conclusions about the profit motive of attackers, Symantec noted that the tools used to launch attacks have become more

sophisticated. In particular, Internet-related threats are gaining momentum through use of "crimeware," software tools built specifically with the intention of committing online scams and stealing information.

Attackers are moving away from large, multiple-purpose attacks against routers and firewalls, according to Symantec. Instead, they are targeting desktop- and Web-based applications that provide an entry point to corporate and personal information.

"Programs that provide attackers with unauthorized control of a computer, known as bots, also contribute to the rise in cybercrime threats," the Symantec report stated.

While the number of bot-infected computers is 11 percent lower than the security firm's last report, Symantec noted that bot networks are being used increasingly for activities like denial-of-service attacks and extortion attempts.

China experienced the largest increase in bot-infected computers, the report stated, most likely related to the country's rapid growth in Internet connections.

EU: Microsoft Still Not Obeying Ruling

The European Commission told Microsoft Corp. on Friday that it was "still not in compliance" with a 2004 antitrust ruling that ordered it to share information with rivals to make their software work with Microsoft servers.

The EU has already threatened the company with 2 million euros (\$2.4 million) in daily fines, backdated to Dec. 15, and said it will make its final decision after a hearing for Microsoft to plead its case later this month.

"The Commission takes the preliminary view that this information continues to be incomplete and inaccurate," the regulators said in a statement, basing their view on two reports from independent experts who looked at the latest version Microsoft had submitted.

Microsoft said the fact that the Commission looked at the evidence after it filed charges last December showed that the charges were "fundamentally flawed and should be withdrawn."

"Microsoft has submitted, in its response to the Commission's statement of objections, a large volume of expert testimony that finds in the clearest terms that Microsoft's documentation reaches or exceeds every industry standard for the documentation of such technologies," it said.

"That documentation, coupled with free technical support and source code access for licensees, meets and surpasses the requirements of the Commission's 2004 decision."

The man appointed to monitor Microsoft's compliance with the ruling - computer science professor Neil Barrett - found that although the documentation had improved slightly, "nothing substantial was added."

"The improvements required to the documentation are not merely refinements or improvements to the text: The documentation as it stands is unusable,"

the Commission said.

Another report from information technology consultancy TAEUS Europe Ltd., described parts of the Microsoft documentation as "entirely inadequate," "devoted to obsolete functionality" and "self-contradictory."

It said the document was written "primarily to maximize volume (page count), while minimizing useful information."

Both experts said Microsoft seemed to assume that users should inform it of incorrect, incomplete or inaccurate information.

TAEUS compared this to a car manufacturer responding to a customer complaint that a car had been delivered without wheels: "This would be like the manufacturer supplying wheels only to have the next deficiency come up - namely that the automobile has no engine, and then no steering wheel, then no brakes, etc."

Last December, the EU charged that Microsoft had not obeyed the 2004 ruling and threatened daily fines. Microsoft will get an oral hearing on March 30 and 31 to plead its case.

The EU will afterward decide if it will fine the company every day from Dec. 15 until the date of its decision to impose the fines. It warned it might take other steps to extend the daily fines.

"What they have done is insufficient," said EU spokesman Jonathan Todd. "It's now two years since the decision."

Earlier Friday, the EU defended Barrett from Microsoft's allegations that he, EU officials and Microsoft rivals had colluded ahead of Barrett writing a report last autumn that criticized Microsoft's earlier efforts to provide documentation.

Microsoft wants to see correspondence between them to see if Barrett had been influenced in any way.

Last week, it asked three U.S. courts to compel Sun Microsystems Inc., IBM Corp., Oracle Corp. and Novell Inc. to hand over correspondence to use as evidence in its legal challenge to the EU charges.

Microsoft said Friday the EU was still failing to address its main criticism that the regulator is acting both as prosecutor and an independent judge of how much access the company should have to documents connected to the case.

The EU levied a record 497 million euro (\$613 million) fine against Microsoft in March 2004. It also ordered the company to share code with rivals and offer a version of Windows without the Media Player software.

Microsoft is appealing the ruling and the case will be heard in late April by the European Court of First Instance, the EU's second-highest court.

CeBIT Show to Unveil New Range of Products

The annual CeBIT high-tech fair is set to show off a new range of advanced mobile phones, ultra-light laptops, powerful yet compact digital cameras

and - maybe - Microsoft's latest secret project.

Established names such as Intel and Samsung will vie for product buzz with newcomers seeking entry into the minds and wallets of consumers at the fair beginning Thursday at the sprawling exhibition center in Hanover.

The show focuses on how companies and countries can expand their business and promote investment, and there also is a growing emphasis on new gadgets for consumers.

"It is the biggest show in Europe, especially for those of us who have operations in Central and Eastern Europe," said Jeremy Roche, chairman of the European Software Association. "It puts us all in a room together and it's a time where we can share views."

While CeBIT remains an industry event at its core, it has branched out in recent years to focus on consumer products from high-powered digital cameras and gaming to the latest in wearable fashion with built-in speakers for portable MP3 players.

The most widely anticipated event is likely to come on opening day, when Microsoft Corp. may unveil its hyped Project Origami. It's expected to be the first version of paperback book-sized computers that will run Microsoft's regular Windows XP operating system.

Microsoft has not said how or where it will reveal the Origami project, but has said it will be unveiled on March 9 - coinciding with the first day of the CeBIT event. The company will also be showing off Office 12, the latest version of its stalwart suite of office-related productivity software.

But staying true to its corporate roots, CeBIT also will feature dozens, if not hundreds, of displays of technology aimed at business users. Intel Corp., the world's biggest maker of semiconductors, will show off technology that can be used by the health care field.

Other companies, however, will not be going at all. Shoko Yanagisawa, a spokeswoman for Sony Corp., said the company will not be at CeBIT due to a "strategic decision after weighing the costs and returns."

She said CeBIT is primarily a telecommunications event and Sony decided it would be more appropriate if Sony Ericsson, its mobile-phone joint venture with Sweden's LM Ericsson, takes part.

This year's phone lineup is expected to display smaller, more feature-laden cell phones using the 3G standard, which permits them to send data at higher speeds, and feature television on their small screens.

CeBIT will also showcase products that are offbeat as well as new.

Dutch distributor of USB memory sticks, SPECS, will have a lineup of the useful portable storage drives, but at a steep price.

One model, designed by White Lake, is made from 14-carat gold and features not one but five diamonds built-in for a touch of flash. It is expected to retail for euro2,950, or around \$3,545, and comes in storage sizes of 128 megabytes to one gigabyte.

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